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MARE ISLAND

# New travel, safety gear design firm opens up on Mare Island

Vallejo resident, military vet, growing innovative company

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Magi Raible's relationship with Mare Island goes way back, so moving her travel/outdoor gear design business to a former officer's quarters there feels something like a homecoming, she said.

The year-old business, LifeGear Design, an award-winning, full service design and sourcing company, started in Benicia, though Raible lives in Vallejo. The firm focuses on products designed to make traveling and outdoor living easier, she said. LifeGear merchandise is sold in more than 100 brick and mortar retail stores around the country, she said.

"We have a LiteGear brand - which includes a lighted safety vest, various bags and the Aero-Tray, which doubles the space and improves the angle of your airplane seat-back tray," Raible said. "The lighted safety vest is life-saving because it doesn't require lights to shine on it to be seen. The travel bags are lightweight and durable and make traveling easier."

Raible said her connection to Vallejo dates back to the early 1960s.

"My father worked at Hunters Point in the '50s and requested a transfer to Mare Island in 1961, so he moved us, all five siblings, from Hayward to the rela-



CHRIS RILEY—VALLEJO TIMES-HERALD

LifeGear Designs have taken over residency in one of the old naval mansion on Mare Island. From left, Magi Raible, Cabrini Chavoya, Veronica Lerer-Woerz, Trisha Mobley and Maureen Gonzales.

tively rural town of Vallejo," she said.

She and her siblings graduated from Hogan High School, after which Raible joined the United States Air Force, spent "a little while" in Chico, "but, aside from that, pretty much my entire life I've lived in Vallejo," she said.

The decision to move her seven-person firm from Benicia was a no-brainer, Raible said.

"I had been seeing all the positive changes in Vallejo, and we wanted to move back to my own town, so when our lease was up in Benicia, I asked our real estate agent and he showed us this beautiful building," she said. "We want to be part of the positive growth and exciting things that are happening here. I just read about the golf course, restaurant and hotel, the new ferry termi-

nal, the Mare Island Brewing Company and this just seems like the place to be."

Raible said LifeGear is "on an amazing growth curve right now."

Her career in outdoor gear started in the 1980s at The North Face (Company), "and we took the engineering principals and raw materials and transformed them into travel items," she said.

"I love to travel and have been all over Asia, Europe and North America," she said. "Making travel easier and more accessible to people is a passion of mine."

For instance, when she started in the industry, the average carry-on bag weighed about 15 pounds. Her design is six pounds, Raible said.

"We invented packing cubes that compress the things inside," she said. "Our

toiletry kits come with a reusable clear, vinyl bag. We have a poncho that folds into a pouch to wear around your waste," and a slew of other "clever, innovative travel accessories."

One way Raible's team comes up with their ideas is by monitoring trends within the PSA, the FAA and other agencies, "to create products that are compliant with the latest rules of traveling," Raible said.

Vallejo Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Rich Curtola said new business in Vallejo is always good news.

"We're excited to have a new company in Vallejo," he said. "We're thrilled that lifeGear sees Vallejo as a good opportunity for them, and more business on Mare Island is exciting." An open house last month drew "an amazing turnout" that included several city officials and local and regional dignitaries or their representatives, that Raible said made her feel "so welcomed by the island and the city. About 60 guests showed up. It was great."

LifeGear's new Mare Island headquarters is in Quarters H, a former Naval officer's mansion.

"Three or four historians came and told us some stuff we didn't know and showed us some secret passageways. It was great," Raible said.

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